

COWS guide to managing liver fluke in bought-in cattle



Bringing in cattle or sheep from markets, other farms or common grazing can introduce new diseases to your own farm, including parasites such as liver fluke. Liver fluke is a common parasite that infects cattle, sheep and other domestic animals as well as wildlife such as deer and rabbits.

Resistance of liver fluke to treatments, in particular products containing triclabendazole (TCBZ), appears to be an increasing problem and one that needs managing on all livestock farms. It is important that care is taken to reduce selection pressure for resistance whenever possible by only using triclabendazole-containing products when no other options are suitable. Other medicines which contain the active ingredients, closantel, clorsulon, nitroxylnil, oxyclozanide and albendazole are effective against adult flukes and some (nitroxylnil and closantel) are effective against late immature stages between seven and eight weeks old.

Summary of flukicide products licensed for use in cattle

(see the COWS 'Flukicide Products for Cattle' guide for more information)

Active ingredient	Administration route	Stage of fluke killed
Triclabendazole	Oral	2 weeks onwards
	Pour-on	6-8 weeks onwards
Closantel	s/c injection or pour-on	7 weeks onwards
Nitroxylnil	s/c injection	8 weeks onwards
Clorsulon	s/c injection	Adults only
Oxyclozanide	Oral	Adults only
Albendazole	Oral	Adults only



The objective of quarantine treatments is to minimise the risk of introducing resistant liver fluke onto your farm and, importantly, to avoid contamination of pastures. Quarantine measures should be applied to all incoming livestock. This includes those purchased (or hired) from other herds and flocks (including bulls/rams), and cattle or sheep, which have been grazing on other farms or common grazing, including tack sheep.

STEP 1 ► HOUSE

Keep newly arrived cattle inside, yarded or on snail free pastures*, away from other livestock, until quarantine treatments have been completed, the animals have been tested and results show they are free of infection. This will reduce the risk of introducing resistant fluke onto your farm (TCBZ-R fluke).

STEP 2 ► TREAT

It is safest to assume that brought-in animals are infected with resistant liver fluke. When housing is possible or where cattle can be kept on snail free pastures, treatment can be delayed until the fluke are sufficiently mature to be killed by the chosen product. If cattle are treated immediately they may need a second treatment to kill off any fluke that were too young to be killed by the first treatment. This will depend on the product you use. Your vet, SQP or veterinary pharmacist can tell you when to give the second treatment (see the COWS 'Flukicide Products for Cattle' guide for information).

STEP 3 ► TEST

Do not turn animals out on to pasture that might harbour snails, until they are free of infection. This means checking dung for fluke eggs post-treatment to check that all fluke have been killed. Alternatively, the copro-antigen test offered by a number of different diagnostic labs can indicate if treatment has been successful. It is recommended that dung samples are checked 6 weeks after treatment to ensure no fluke have survived. If egg counts are positive, it could indicate the need for re-treatment to remove parasites that have matured since the first treatment.



* Snail habitats include mud around the edges of ponds, streams, rivers and hoof prints or tractor ruts in muddy fields.

For bespoke treatment and product advice specific to your farm, discuss with your vet, SQP or veterinary pharmacist and visit the NOAH, COWS or AHDB BRP cattle and sheep parasite control product guide for more information.

Further cattle flukicide products may be authorised in the UK and the existing products may be modified. For the latest information refer to the VMD's product information database: <http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/>

Advice regarding control of parasites including liver fluke, in sheep can be found at www.scops.org.uk

